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Subject: Flint Hills settlement articles if you haven't seen them

WIRE SERVICES

North Pole refiner offers groundwater settlement

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The Associated Press
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(09/04/10 22:10:04)

FAIRBANKS -- Flint Hills Resources has offered a bulk water tank along with a cash settlement to some North Pole area homeowners affected by tainted groundwater, a spokesman says.

The company also has connected 28 homes to North Pole's municipal water system.

A proposal to more than 100 additional homeowners whose wells are contaminated with sulfolane from the North Pole refinery is expected to be announced this month, refinery spokesman Jeff Cook told the Fairbanks Daily News-Miner.

Gasoline spills that occurred before 2000 are believed to have soaked into soil at the refinery and caused sulfolane to seep into the groundwater.

Flint Hills bought the refinery from Williams Alaska Petroleum Inc. in 2004 and discovered the contamination last year.

Cook declined to disclose the amount of the cash settlement offered to some homeowners, saying the offers were made ahead of other homeowners because of special considerations, such as new construction.

Flint Hills is drilling new wells for the North Pole city water system and expects them to be connected by year's end, he said.

Sulfolane is used in refining oil. Trace amounts were found in the city of North Pole's two wells, which supply water to more than 500 businesses and homes.

The contamination stretches about 3 miles northwest of the refinery. Most of the tainted wells are outside city limits.

Sulfolane levels in many of the private wells exceed standards recommended by the federal government.

Flint Hills has been providing bottled water to affected households. State officials said the sulfolane levels are well below levels that made laboratory animals sick.

Both Flint Hills and Williams are named in a lawsuit involving James West, one of the property owners.

Attorney Jason Weiner said his request to broaden West's lawsuit into a class-action case was denied.

Weiner said his law office is talking to other homeowners but no one else has joined.

NEWS MINER

Flint Hills tries to make amends for North Pole refinery spill

by Amanda Bohman / abohman@newsminer.com

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FAIRBANKS — Flint Hills Resources has offered a bulk water tank along with a cash settlement to some North Pole area homeowners affected by tainted groundwater, the refinery spokesman said this week.

The company also has connected 28 homes to North Pole's municipal water system.

A proposal to more than 100 homeowners whose wells are contaminated with sulfolane from the North Pole refinery is expected to be announced by the end of September, refinery spokesman Jeff Cook said.

Gasoline spills that occurred before 2000 are believed to have soaked into soil at the refinery and caused sulfolane to seep into the groundwater.

Flint Hills bought the refinery from Williams Alaska Petroleum Inc. in 2004 and discovered the contamination last year.

Cook declined to disclose the amount of the cash settlement offered to some homeowners, saying the offers were made ahead of other homeowners because of special considerations, such as new construction.

Flint Hills is in the midst of drilling new wells for the North Pole city water system, Cook said.

Trace amounts of sulfolane, a chemical used in the oil refining process, were found in the city of North Pole's two wells, which supply water to more than 500 businesses and homes.

"The new wells for the city are being drilled and the water main extensions to connect the new wells to the water plant at the city of North Pole are under construction," Cook stated in an e-mail. "We expect these projects to be completed by the end of the year."

The contamination stretches to a point about 3 miles northwest of the refinery. Most of the tainted wells are outside North Pole city limits.

Sulfolane levels in many of the private wells exceed standards recommended by the federal Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry. Flint Hills has been providing bottled water to affected households. State officials said the sulfolane levels are well below levels that made laboratory animals sick.

Both Flint Hills and Williams are named in a lawsuit involving James West, one of the affected property owners.

Attorney Jason Weiner said his request to broaden West's lawsuit into a class-action case was denied. Weiner said his law office is talking to other homeowners but no one else has joined the lawsuit.

"We are going to be basically representing people on an individual basis until we can move again to re-certify," Weiner said.

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